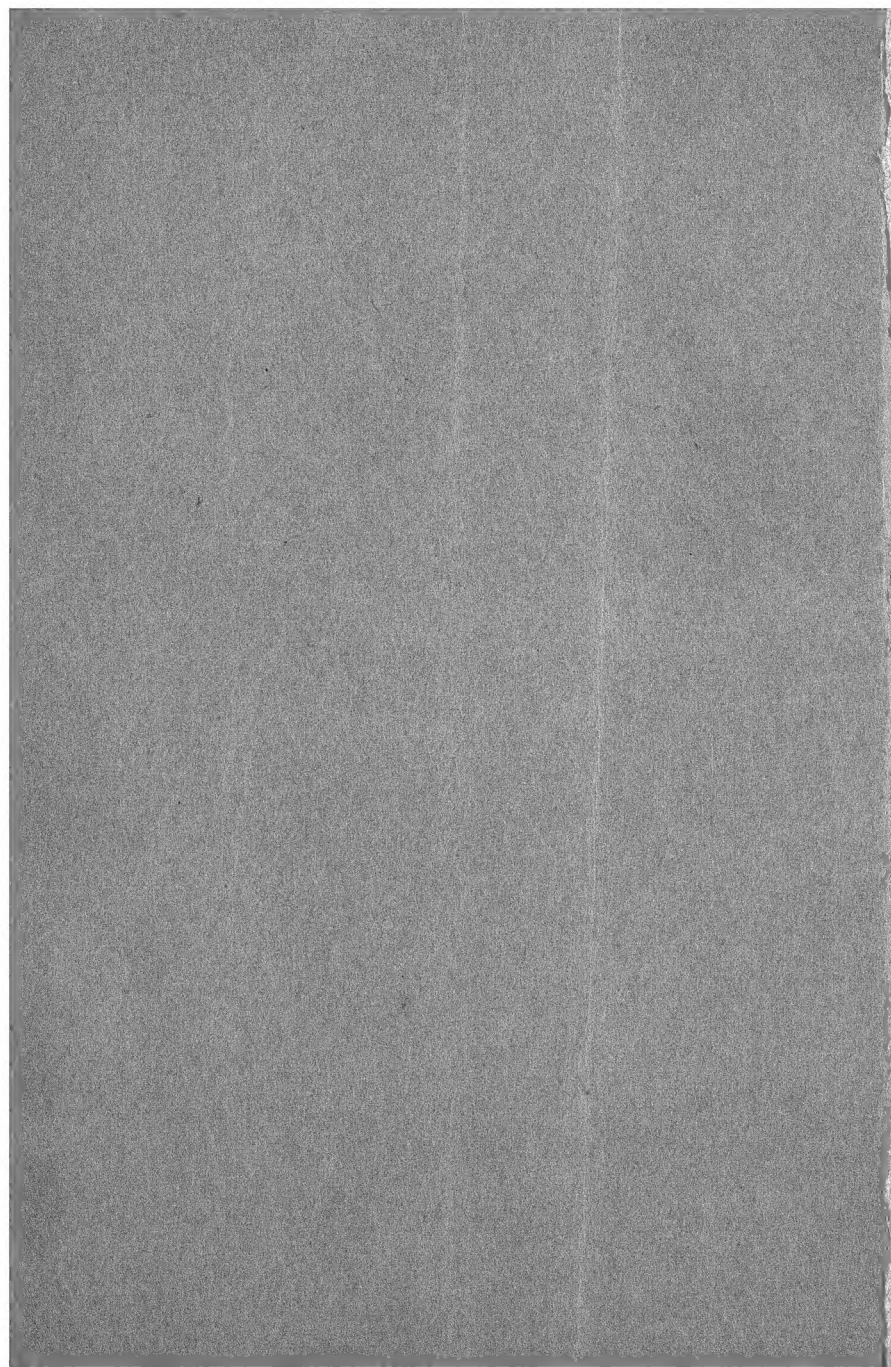


RANCHING WITH LORDS AND COMMONS

A SEQUEL

BY
J. R. CRAIG

TORONTO, 1924



Pam
636.2
C886ora

RANCHING WITH LORDS AND COMMONS

A SEQUEL

BY
J. R. CRAIG

TORONTO, 1924

66.9.30/12

**COPYRIGHT, CANADA, 1924 BY
J. R. CRAIG**

1 / 14

RANCHING WITH LORDS AND COMMONS

CHAPTER I.

WHAT THE BOOK WAS ABOUT

TWENTY YEARS AGO I published a book, "Ranching with Lords and Commons", which as far as a search in the Toronto Reference Library discovers, is the only book ever published which even attempts to tell a consecutive historical story of ranching under the earlier conditions of settlement in the Canadian prairie country. The volume was widely generously reviewed in Canada and Great Britain; and, I hear, is still much called for in western school libraries. It gives the story of my experience as the manager of a company-owned ranch with operating headquarters near Macleod, and financial headquarters in London. What was "near" Macleod then is near Claresholm now, for "Ranching with Lords and Commons" deals with the pre-railway period between Calgary and the international boundary. Indeed, when I went into that country the Canadian Pacific Railway had not reached Alberta, and access was by rail to the terminus at Silver Bow in Montana, thence by trail 700 miles, north west to Macleod.

I am now finishing "Ranching with Lords and Commons", in consequence of a request received from a member of the British Parliament, who, after reading the book, wrote asking for the completion. It was only then that I realised that the book really left the permanent interest of the story in the air, for which, no doubt, my inexperience as a writer was responsible. But before concluding the account of a strange and disappointing experience it is neces-

2 RANCHING WITH LORDS AND COMMONS

sary, for the information of readers who have not seen "Ranching with Lords and Commons" to summarise the main facts recorded in that volume.

During the eighteen seventies I was engaged in farming in Peel County, Ontario, and as my father was, I was also a breeder and importer of pedigreed cattle, sheep and swine, exporting cattle to Englnad, and was very well known as a representative cattle man. I was a pioneer Canadian exhibitor at leading shows in the United States, beginning at St. Louis in 1871, and was Secretary of the Arts and Agricultural Association of Ontario. When a railway was being built across the Canadian prairies, and it was clear that an export trade in cattle could be developed from Alberta, where the climate was as favourable for ranching as it was in Montana, I determined to get into this business. Accordingly at Ottawa I obtained a 21-year lease of a hundred thousand acres of grazing land, at a cent per acre per annum, with an option to buy ten thousand acres at a dollar an acre. On this basis I began to organize a Canadian ranching company, which should carry ten thousand cattle. A proportion of the capital having been subscribed by friends of mine I went to England to raise the remainder. There I was brought in contact with a well known leader of the legal profession, and member of the House of Commons, who offered to raise all the money required, on condition that the company were a private undertaking. My friends at home, taking the view that as all the money required could be so obtained, and that it would be better for the development of Canada to have as much rather than as little British money as possible in the ranching business, stepped aside, and the private company came into existence. The chairman was the eminent lawyer and statesman, the Right Honourable Alexander Staveley Hill, Q.C., P.C., D.C.L., J.P., D.L., Recorder of Banbury, Deputy High Steward of Oxford University, Counsel to the Admiralty and Judge-Advocate of the Fleet in the recent administration of Lord Beaconsfield, M.P., for Coventry 1868-74, for West Staffordshire from 1874 until when I met him in 1881. He held that seat until redistribution caused him to move in 1885 to the Kingswinford division of Staffordshire, which, he represented until his death. The concern was

called the Oxley Ranch Company, after Mr. Hill's country place near Wolverhampton.

The Lords' side of the Oxley Ranch Company was represented by the first Earl of Lathom, who, on Lord Beaconsfield going out of office in 1880 had been raised in the peerage from the barony of Skelmersdale. Besides owning eleven thousand acres of land in Lancashire he was also very rich in mineral properties. Lord Lathom was not in office when he became a director of the Oxley Ranch Company, but later, under Lord Salisbury, was Lord Chamberlain. The last time I saw him he was conducting Queen Victoria from the Houses of Parliament to the state coach for the return to Buckingham Palace—and a very different scene it was from some in which I had been with him in Alberta and Montana.

With a directorate composed of such members of Mr. Baird a brother-in-law of Mr. Hill, and the wives of all three gentlemen, the outlook for the Oxley Ranch was exceedingly promising when, in 1882, I went into the foothills from Fort Benton to locate headquarters and stock and equip the range.

CHAPTER II.

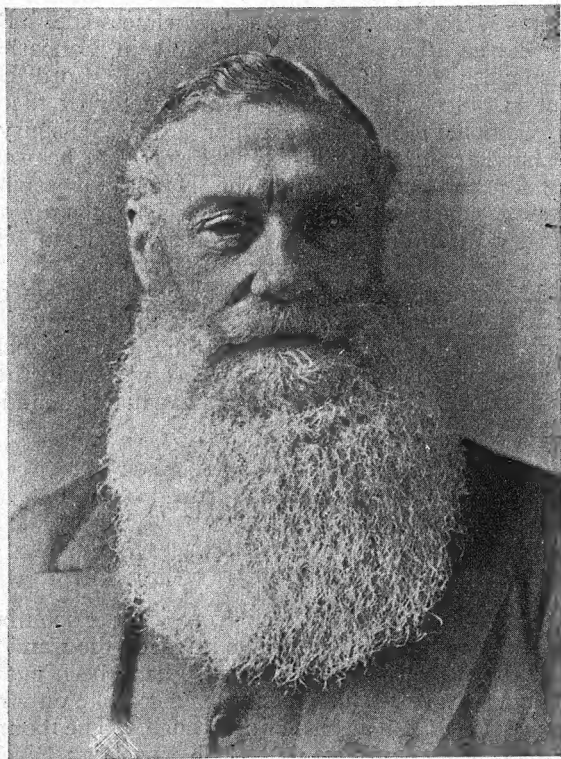
THE WEST FORTY YEARS AGO.

IT WAS a different West then from what it soon became. The white population of the whole hundred thousand square miles of the district of Alberta could have been put into a small Ontario town. Ranchers with leases like ours did not keep their stock on a fenced-off range. The boundaries were broadly set—ours on the North was High River, near which the Prince of Wales now has a holding, and the Old Man River, at Macleod, sixty miles south. The cattle of several ranges ran together, and each Spring and Fall there was a co-operative round-up for calf-branding and other purposes incidental to keeping the multiplication table on its proper legs.

Ours was a cowboy country, and getting into and out of it was, of course, by cayuse and waggon express. On

4 RANCHING WITH LORDS AND COMMONS

the United States side of the boundary the frontier towns were as they are described by the colourful writers, though sometimes I think the descriptions are rather tame in comparison with what we saw during the long journeys inci-



THE LATE FIRST EARL OF LATHOM
Chairman of Board of Directors of the Oxley Ranch, Limited.
By permission of Elliott & Fry, London, Eng.

dental to establishing a ranch with several thousand cattle, and giving directors belonging to the House of Parliament an insight into the western life. Some of the incidents narrated briefly in "Ranching with Lords and Commons"

seem scarcely believable nowadays; but I have been told by those who are familiar with such things, that they would work remarkably well into a moving-picture story of the West as we lived in it forty years ago, and particularly as



THE LATE COUNTESS OF LATHOM
Director of Oxley Ranch, Limited.

By permission of J. Russell and Sons, London, Eng.

it furnished a setting for the extraordinary methods of highly placed English aristocrats.

Such things as finding a cheerful man recovering from a bullet wound through his body, given by his landlady,

6 RANCHING WITH LORDS AND COMMONS

who was annoyed because he came home late, and keeping the wound from fouling by repeatedly passing through it a smoothened stick covered with bacon-fat—while intensely interesting and perhaps picturesque, things like this are only the surface plays of the development of a vast country under novel conditions. The economic side of ranching in those early days is of more permanent interest, and it is to this aspect of my experience that "Ranching with Lords and Commons" owes, I think, whatever permanent value it possesses.

I was manager for a private company, the exalted standing of whose directors was my chief warrant for proceeding on lines which the event proved to be disastrous to myself. I was to have long and bitter experience of financial promises that were not kept, and of difficulties which gave to the Oxley Ranch an unenviable notoriety in Alberta and Montana.

In fulness of time it was announced to the British public that the Oxley Ranch lands had been personally selected by Mr. Staveley Hill himself, and that he had "resided" on the property. It is true that he was first on the ground, in the late fall of 1882. But I had already come in and located the site for our headquarters, in pursuance of the lease which I had personally secured before I ever saw or heard of Mr. Hill, and which I had turned into the company at a valuation of twenty-five cents per acre, or \$25,000.00.

As a sample of the proceedings narrated in the book perhaps our purchase of cattle in the summer of 1884 is the most typical. I received a letter from Mr. Hill directing me to buy cattle in Montana additional to the 4,000 head we then had on the range. His instructions were to buy on credit, and he enclosed a special cable code for reporting the purchase of any quantity between one and four thousand, and for drawing on him for the purchase price variously at sight, one, two, or three months, for amounts ranging between eighty thousand and one hundred and forty thousand dollars.

It was entirely against practice for Montana ranchers to sell cattle on the terms proposed; but by showing Mr. Hill's letter and insisting on the standing of my principals (I told how I had myself seen Lord Lathom buy a cow in

RANCHING WITH LORDS AND COMMONS 7

New York for over \$30,000.00) I was able to buy 2,600 head from three young men. The cattle were held for the proceeds of the first draft for 8 per cent. of the total purchase price of \$80,000. It was not forthcoming, delays became exasperating, and the sheriff then seized the herd. The drafts not being honoured, as promised, one of the vendors set out for Oxley during the winter and was frozen to death. Ten months later the money was paid, by which time many cattle had been lost, immense expense was incurred, and the Oxley Ranch was becoming known as a subject for sheriffs' serious attention. It would naturally appear that my own position would have been simplified by a retirement from the enterprise. But, when difficulty had become serious—it was when Earl Lathom was at Helena in Montana, returning to England from a visit to the ranch, and learned, for the first time of the shifts I had been put to in order to keep our credit alive—including the borrowing of money from a firm of store-keepers, which greatly scandalized his lordship—I was assured that all would be well. Besides, I had furnished the lease, without which we could not have operated at all, and I had used thousands of my own dollars to meet such pressing claims as cowboys' wages. All things considered it seemed the best plan to hang on with the Lords and Commons..

CHAPTER III.

A TRIP TO ENGLAND.

BUT THINGS did not improve. The shiftless disregard of obligations, that had done so much harm in Montana, continued to be applied to affairs on the Canadian side of the line, where the sheriff became our attached caller. The London control manifested itself in such proposals as a request to drive several hundred head of steers that we wished to put on the market all the way from the foothills to Winnipeg—fine shape they would have been in after such a journey on their own hoofs!

During the Summer of 1885 the directors sent a relative of one of them to "assist" me at the ranch, a pleasant but

8 RANCHING WITH LORDS AND COMMONS

totally inexperienced man. After some time I found he had been given power of attorney. In September he took possession of the ranch. I re-took possession by law, announced the fact to London, and was cabled for. I had



THE LATE RIGHT HONOURABLE A. STAVELEY HILL,
Q.C., M.P., D.C.L., J.P., D.L.

Managing Director of the Oxley Ranch, Limited.

By permission of J. Russell and Sons, London, Eng.

a strange time in London. I was asked for the accounts, although by letter I had been told, "You will of course leave with Mr. Pinhorn all books and accounts". I was

asked how many head of cattle we had had, and answered from memory that the total purchased was 11,129.

Mr. Hill turned to Lord Lathom and said; "You see, we have, according to Craig's report, 11,129 head of cattle on the range".



MRS. STAVELEY HILL
A Director of the Oxley Ranch, Limited.

I said, "I report nothing of the kind. You haven't deducted our sales, or the sales made by the sheriff. Our books shew about 7,500 head".

10 RANCHING WITH LORDS AND COMMONS

Really, that was the end of my direct association with ranching Lords and Commons. They left it to be inferred that they had dismissed me, and I returned to the West to go into ranching for myself at Meadow Creek, about fifteen miles from the Oxley Ranch. The first definite news of my dismissal came through a cable sent by the company to the Macleod Gazette on the eve of my leaving England. The manager sent out from England later committed suicide; but the ranch did not come to an end with that melancholy event.

The value of the stock and plant I had estimated at \$270,000, the cattle at a flat rate of \$33 per head. In the Spring of 1886 a prospectus was issued in London, offering shares in the New Oxley (Canada) Ranch Company, the capital of which was £120,000, or roughly, three hundred thousand dollars more than the property was worth. It stated that the herd numbered, as per books, 11,129 head; but only 10,000 head would be charged for, at \$45 per head, and the calves dropped since the Fall round-up would not be charged for. High finance never did a more brazen thing than the issuing of this prospectus.

Here "Ranching with Lords and Commons" comes to a close, so far as my direct experience with Mr. Hill and Lord Lathom is concerned. But the chapter was not ended precisely in that way. I had furnished the lease at an extremely moderate valuation. I was out of pocket sixteen thousand dollars; and was short twenty-five hundred dollars of salary. The least I could do was to try to get my own back.

In London I had employed a solicitor, who, when I raised the question of taking action against my Lords and Commons pointed out that a mere exposure of their financial proceedings would scarcely be effective, so far as personal redress was concerned. My family was in western Canada. Legal action would be tedious, costly, and its outcome doubtful, in England. So I put aside the idea of making a fight there: and as the new company was not launched by its mendacious prospectus until after I *had* returned to Canada, and I was immersed in starting life afresh, I was left to do what I could on Canadian soil.

I consulted a Calgary lawyer—a Mr. Bleeker, who had acted for us in our difficulties with the sheriff—and he advised me that I had a perfectly good case for the value of the lease I had turned into the company which had dismissed me, for the advances made to meet the company's pressing liabilities, and for the arrears of salary. These together amounted to \$43,500. He also advised me to sue for wrongful dismissal. After many discussions I instructed Bleeker to proceed. In view of the magnitude of the suit I paid him \$650 in advance, being assured that I would receive vigorous and aggressive service.

Macleod is a hundred miles from Calgary. At that time there was no railway connection, and, of course, the telephone was not in commercial use. To keep in touch with my lawyer necessitated several long journeys. At first he assured me that all was going well. Then there was a period in which delays were imperfectly explained. At last, becoming doubtful of Mr. Bleeker's fidelity, I discussed the situation with a banker friend in Calgary, expressing my doubts about Mr. Bleeker.

After some conversation the banker said, "I think I would take the case out of Bleeker's hands. I have reason to believe he has been in communication with the other side, and that doesn't mean much good for you". I pressed him to tell me anything further he knew, and at last he said, "Well, a few days ago I cashed a cheque for Bleeker for \$2,000 from the New Oxley Ranch Company, in London."

That decided my course towards Mr. Bleeker I went first to my hotel, to secure a trusty friend I always carried in my suitcase, and then sought Mr. Bleeker in his office.

CHAPTER IV.

FLIGHT OF MR. BLEEKER.

CALGARY was not much of a place in those days. It was founded only when the C.P.R. arrived, in 1884. I have just looked over the first directory of Calgary, published about the time I was cabled for to London. It is about eight inches by five in size. Its business and professional lists,

12 RANCHING WITH LORDS AND COMMONS

each name in which fills a line across the page, makes up only two pages altogether. One lawyer is Mr. Bleeker, another is Mr. James A. Lougheed who had as partner Mr. McCarthy, his business having grown through real estate and insurance, and particularly his agency for C.P.R. and Hudson's Bay Company lands.

Bleeker's office was upstairs. I climbed the steps in a hurry, asked a youth in the outer office if his employer was in. He said he was, and I strode into Bleeker unannounced.

"Bleeker, stand up," I said, or rather yelled.

Perhaps my face looked something like what I had in my pocket, or my voice spoke like it; for Bleeker stood up swiftly and tremblingly, though he was over six feet tall, a big, striking-looking man, and I was quite a moderate-sized fellow. Without preface I told him to get all the papers in the lawsuit. He answered he would get them from the clerks across the hallway. He started for their room, and as he crossed the hall his terror caused him to vomit. His clerks beheld him with astonishment; but they produced only a few unimportant papers in the suit *Craig vs. New Oxley Ranch Company*. It seemed as if I was on a wild-goose chase indeed.

Oddly, I noticed the edge of a sheet of paper sticking out from under the coal-box in the corner. I demanded sharply to be shown what was beneath the coal-box. Bleeker and his clerk lifted the coal away and there were all the letters that had passed between Hill and myself, and most of the papers in the suit, though some were mutilated and all were dirty.

I compelled Bleeker to go with me to Lougheed & McCarthy's office, where at my behest he told McCarthy about the case, asking him to take it up. McCarthy was slightly deaf. Bleeker was not recovered from his fright, so I asked him to speak louder, so that there could be no doubt as to what was said. To my further prompting he asked McCarthy how much his fee would be for taking the case, to which McCarthy answered that it would be two hundred dollars.

Bleeker said he would pay the money in the afternoon, when he brought over the documents, but I said afternoon would not do—then was the time. However, without fur-

ther protest I allowed him to return to his office to get the money, while I went back to the hotel, feeling that another very strange phase of a very strange history was impending. But Bleeker did not visit McCarthy again that day, and that night he left Calgary and has never been seen there



MR. GEORGE BAIRD

Director of Oxley Ranch, Limited.

since. He was heard of later in Los Angeles. The last inquiry I made about him was directed to Sir James Lougheed, at the Senate, whose reply is perhaps interesting:

Ottawa, 7th March, 1924.

"My dear Mr. Craig,—

"I received with very much pleasure your letter of 7th instant. I regret that I had not the opportunity of seeing you in Toronto. In fact I was unaware that

14 RANCHING WITH LORDS AND COMMONS

you were living in that city. To meet you and to have a chat over old times will be pleasure at any time I should be in Toronto.

"I regret that I cannot give you any information about Henry Bleeker. I understand some years ago he was practising law in Los Angeles, and during the year alternated between there and the Yukon. I cannot even suggest at the moment where you would get information concerning him.

"Believe me, with personal regards,

"Yours faithfully,

"JAMES A. LOUGHEED."

John R. Craig, Esquire.
172 Howland Avenue,
Toronto, Canada.

Before adding something about the capitalization of the public company which bought out the private concern it may be as well to give a copy of the writ of summons that I found in Bleeker's office:

COAT OF ARMS.

WRIT OF SUMMONS

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE NORTH-WEST TERRITORIES
SOUTHERN ALBERTA JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Between

JOHN R. CRAIG of this Judicial District,

Plaintiff

and

The OXLEY RANCH COMPANY LTD.,

of this Judicial District,

Defendants.

VICTORIA, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, QUEEN, Defender of the Faith, etc., etc., etc.

To the above-named defendants:—

You are notified that the plaintiff has entered an action against you, in the above-named Court, for the recovery of the claim or demand, a statement of which is filed in Court and annexed to this summons.

And you are commanded that if you dispute the said claim, either in whole or part, you do, within ten days from the service of this writ on you, exclusive of the day of such service, cause to be entered for you, in the office of the Clerk of this Court, an appearance, together with a statement of the grounds on which such dispute is based.

And take notice, that in default of your so doing, the plaintiff may proceed in his said action, and judgment may be given in your absence and without further notice to you.

Issued at Macleod, N.W.T. The seventeenth day of February, A.D. 1888.

G. N. CAMPBELL,
(Clerk of the Court)

N.B.—This writ is to be served within twelve months from the date thereof, or if renewed within six months from the day of the last renewal, including the day of such date, and not afterwards.

This writ was issued by Henry Bleeker of the Town of Calgary, N.W.T. Advocate for the Plaintiff.....

This Writ of Summons was not served on the defendants—the only document rescued from the mess under the coal which was not mutilated and dirty beyond recognition, all papers of importance in the suit against the Oxley Ranch Company being destroyed in Bleeker's office—I deemed it useless to attempt further to get my case brought into Court.

The capitalization of the New Oxley Ranch Company was £120,000. This works out at the then rate of exchange of \$4.86 to the pound at \$583,200.

As a matter of interest I may as well give a list of the directors of the new company and the shares they held, valued at £9.10 each, supplied to me by A. R. Springett, who succeeded Mr. Pinhorne as manager of the ranch:—

16 RANCHING WITH LORDS AND COMMONS

The Directors of the New Oxley (Canada) Ranch Co., Limited,

	SHARES
The Earl of Lathom, Chairman.....	658
Countess of Lathom	55
George Baird	329
Mrs. George Baird	55
Rt. Hon. A. S. Hill.....	318
Mrs. Staveley Hill.....	110
H. S. Hill, son of above.....	20
Granville Ryder	100
G. P. H. Villiers	55
Oxley Ranch Co.	236
1,936 shares at £9.10.....	
18,392 at \$4.86	\$89,385.12

Address of New Oxley Canada Ranch Co., Limited, Suffolk House, Lawrence Putney Hill, E.C.

Lord Lathom, The Queen's Lord Chamberlain. The Countess of Lathom, the second of three daughters of the fourth Earl of Clarendon. The famous foreign Secretary, and was consequently sister of the present Earl. Her oldest sister is the Countess of Derby, and the youngest is the Baroness Ampthill, widow of the late Lord Ampthill, so long her late majesty's Ambassadors at Berlin. In 1860 Lady Alice Villiers marries The Earl of Lathom, then Lord Skermersdale, Their eldest son, Lord Skermersdale married the only daughter of the Earl of Radnor, and their second daughter became in 1887 the wife of the Rev. Lord William Cecil, second son of the Marquis of Salisbury.

My valuation of the whole property was \$270,000. This left an excess capitalization of \$313,200. Is there any reasonable explanation as to the purpose for which this extra sum might be sought from the public, and all of which was payable to the vendors? I think there is, for though Staveley Hill was something of a company promoter, the association of Lord Lathom with the Oxley Ranch placed that company in a somewhat different category from others, such as The Venezuela and Panama Gold Mining Company, which Mr. Hill and his brother-in-law, Mr. George Baird, put on the market while I was in London, at a capitalization of £150,000.

CHAPTER V.

£60,000. AND "INFANTS' MONEY."

LORD LATHOM, when in the West, was greatly shocked to learn that we had been compelled to borrow money from shopkeepers, and talked strongly about ending that sort of thing for ever. When in London I met Mr. Baird, along with other directors, and Mr. Baird astonished me by abruptly asking:

"What did you do with the £60,000 I sent you?"

The only possible answer was, "I never received any money from you".

"I gave it to Mr. Hill for the ranch," he said: and that was all the information that was given me on the matter. Whether Mr. Baird got his £60,000 out of the new capitalization of the ranch I have no definite knowledge.

A sidelight on this and kindred matters may be furnished by an incident which took place when Mr. Hill was camped on the Old Man River above Macleod with me and several cowboys from the ranch, at the time of the difficulty about the express agent's money, narrated on pages 142 and 143 of the book.

A cowboy brought letters to the camp. One that was given to Mr. Hill caused him so much obvious disturbance that I supposed it must contain news of a personal bereavement. He called me aside and said, "Craig this letter is a very serious matter", and in reply to a question as to its nature—illness or death?—he said, "Oh no", and began to read:

"You did not meet me as you promised in London, and, hearing that you had gone to Liverpool to take passage for Canada, I followed you there; but the steamer had sailed. I crossed over to Ireland, hoping to catch you at Queens-town, but was again too late. But I will sail on the next ship to see you".

I tried to console Hill, but he looked the picture of despair, and finally said: "It is infants' money; it is infants' money!"

From that moment he lost his habitually brisk and cheer-

18 RANCHING WITH LORDS AND COMMONS

ful manner, and hastily left for Calgary, the railway, and England.

Looking back on ranching with Lords and Commons, on the sacrifice of my interest in the grazing lease, on the loss of money advanced to stave off creditors, and the arrears of pay; though I did what I thought became a man who was looking after an interest to which he was deeply committed, I cannot but think at this distance that mine was *infants' money*, too. Certainly the ranching Lords and Commons played ducks and drakes with it.

THE END

J. H. DE FOREST

CLARESHOLM ALBERTA.

